Same-sex marriage left up to churches

By PAUL ASAY
THE GAZETTE

A few Colorado Springs churches must decide whether to follow their denomination's lead in embracing same-sex marriage.

The discussion — launched after a denominational vote Monday by the United Church of Christ — is just beginning, church leaders say. They say it may take months for independent congregations to decide what to do.

Even at this early stage, it's clear that choosing could be painful.

"Nobody's going to be out partying," said the Rev. James Chapman, senior pastor for the 200-member Broadmoor Community Church. "There are too many difficult barriers for some people who we love and care for."

Six churches in El Paso County belong to the United Church of Christ — one of

was affected

Middleton noted that the security team held a meeting with homeowners to ensure cooperation.

Sulzman said outside the courtroom that demonstrators were not invited to meet with security officials. They ended up picketing outside the perimeter, about 300 feet from the conference, where delegates, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, were meeting.

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CHURCH: Denomination gay-friendly

FROM PAGE 1

the nation's most progressive mainline denominations. The UCC has long been considered gay-friendly; it ordained its first openly gay minister in 1972 and encouraged its churches to allow homosexuals access to all church jobs in 1985. The city's largest UCC church — the 700-member First Congregational Church-United Church of Christ — has been blessing same-sex unions for a decade.

The United Church of Christ took another step in accepting homosexuality within the church Monday when its General Synod passed the Equal Marriage Rights resolution in Atlanta. The resolution asks member churches to consider blessing same-sex marriages in its sanctuaries and to push for its legalization in the country's courtrooms.

The resolution's passage was expected, but denominational leaders acknowledged that the resolution could cause some churches to leave the UCC fold. Chapman doesn't think any local UCC church is on the verge of splitting with the denomination over the resolution, which he said was the "beginning of the conversation."

"I personally agree with the resolution," he said. "I thought it was bold and the right thing to do. I also think it's going to be difficult on a lot of congregations."

Chapman said he has received calls from congregants asking what the resolution means for them.

Unlike other denominations, the UCC does not tell its member churches what to do; it offers guidelines and suggestions. Churches are not compelled to follow.

"Statements are not binding," the Rev. David Knight of the 218-member Black Forest Community Church said of the Synod. "Each congregation is completely autonomous."

"We've done this already," said the Rev. Bill Mulford, interim pastor at First Congregational. "I suspect in terms of the congregation's perspective of it, this will be old news."

Colonel: NATO ordered securi

Activists suing city over secure area

By ED SEALOVER
THE GAZETTE

DENVER • The decision to keep protesters away from a meeting of defense ministers at The Broadmoor hotel was made by NATO,

And it seemed to intrigue U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch, presiding over the trial's second day.

Citizens for Peace in Space claims the city prevented protesters from exercising their freedom of speech by keeping them outside

But Air Force Col. Ulysses Middleton, security coordinator for the 19-nation event, said NATO demanded that only people attending the conference or cleared by security be allowed through the security zone.

This is standard for the alliance and has been used at other meetings around the world, he said.

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